

# China's "New Thinking" on Japan\*

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**ABSTRACT** Following the publication of Ma Licheng's provocative article "New thinking on relations with Japan" in 2002 China witnessed a remarkable public debate on Japan policy. Academics tangled with internet nationalists, and heavy pressure was put on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take a tough line on Japan. The crushing defeat of the "new thinking" and a spate of recent anti-Japanese protests on the Chinese street and in Chinese cyberspace portends trouble in East Asia.

Sino-Japanese relations are at a crossroads. Bilateral trade and economic interdependence continue to increase, but political and security relations are deteriorating. Mutual understanding and trust are in dangerously short supply, and the relationship lurches from one crisis to the next.

Should China do something to rectify the situation? Should Chinese lay the past to rest, accepting Japanese apologies for their wartime transgressions? Or is the burden of resolving the "history question" on Japan? And what about the broader geopolitical situation? Should China try to improve relations with Japan to balance against American hegemony? Can China and Japan work together to create a new Asian regionalism?

These questions are being discussed behind closed doors at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Zhongnanhai, the leadership compound in central Beijing, but they have also recently been taken up with a passion by both academic experts and popular nationalists. Following the publication of Ma Licheng's provocative article "Dui Ri guanxi xin siwei" ("New thinking on relations with Japan") in the final 2002 issue of the influential *Zhanlue yu guanli (Strategy and Management)*, in 2003 China witnessed a remarkable public debate on Japan policy. Ma, a liberal intellectual at *Renmin ribao (People's Daily)*, was cursed as a "traitor" in internet chatrooms for being soft on Japan. Shi Yinhong, an advocate of realpolitik at People's University, came to Ma's defence, arguing in an early 2003 *Strategy and Management* article that *rapprochement* with Japan was indeed in China's interest. Ma and Shi's articles sparked a major debate. *Kang Ri zhanzheng yanjiu (Journal on the War of Resistance against Japan, hereafter War of Resistance)* featured a major collection of views on the "history question" in a summer 2003 issue, and *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi (World Economics and International Politics)* and *Shijie zhishi (World Affairs)* covered the "new thinking"

\* This article was originally written in December 2003. Minor revisions were made in the summer of 2004. It does not, therefore, discuss the three successive weekends of anti-Japanese protests across China in April 2005. The events of 2002–2004 discussed here, however, do foreshadow the continuing deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations that occurred in 2005. Unfortunately, my pessimism appears to have been warranted. Earlier versions of this article were presented at the University of Colorado Boulder and at the Sigur Center for Asian Studies at George Washington University. My thanks to Gilbert Rozman for his helpful comments.

extensively in the autumn, adding fuel to the fire. *Strategy and Management* featured several follow-up articles on the debate as well. Feng Zhaokui, a leading Japan expert at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), declared the public debate on Japan policy in 2003 to be “unprecedented.”<sup>1</sup>

This article interrogates the origins and consequences of the “new thinking” debate in 2003–2004 China; it does not examine Japanese nationalism or Japan’s China policy. China’s Japan policy can be conceptualized at three distinct levels of analysis: policy makers (in Zhongnanhai, the PLA, the MFA and other bureaucracies); policy advisors (pundits in academics and think tanks); and popular opinion (in the Chinese street and cyberspace). This article has a bottom-up orientation, focusing on words and deeds at the levels of popular opinion and policy advisors, and only speculating on their impact at the top level of policy-making. It concludes that there is good news, and there is bad news. The good news is that there is both a vibrant political discourse and a pluralism of views in China today; thanks to the internet, Chinese popular opinion is alive and kicking. The bad news is that the Japan-bashers are ascendant, and that “debate” is probably a misnomer: a winner-takes-all, show-no-mercy style reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution is prevalent. Chinese hatred of Japan still runs deep, and given that Japanese nationalism is also emerging, things do not bode well for 21st century Sino-Japanese relations.

*“Traitors!” A Fashion Model, A Film Director and Anti-Japanese Sentiment in 2002 China*

Ma’s late 2002 article must be understood in the context of the “Zhao Wei wears the Imperial Japanese flag” and “Jiang Wen goes to Yasukuni” incidents that happened in the previous year.

The September 2001 issue of the state-run *Shizhuang* (*Fashion*) magazine featured a picture of Chinese model/actress Zhao Wei wearing a short dress with a large Imperial Japanese flag imprinted upon it. The picture had been taken during a photo shoot in New York City, and the dress had been designed by a young American designer named Richie Rich. On 3 December 2001 a Hunan newspaper ran an exposé on the photograph, igniting widespread internet condemnation and national coverage.<sup>2</sup> The *Chengdu Daily* printed “An open letter from Nanjing massacre survivors to Zhao Wei” three days later. Describing themselves as “indignant” (*fenkai*) at her action, they demanded that she make a

1. Feng Zhaokui, “Jinnian Zhongri guanxi guanjianci: Xin shiqi, xin siwei” (“The keywords of Sino-Japanese relations this year: new era and new thinking”), *Shijie zhishi* (*World Affairs*), No. 20 (16 October 2003), p. 37. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Chinese are my own.

2. See, for example, Zhang Datian, “Zhao Wei zhao ‘Ribei junqizhuang’ yinlai juda fengbo” (“Zhao Wei wears a ‘Japanese military flag outfit’ and creates a furor”), *Beijing chenbao* (*Beijing Morning Post*), 4 December 2001. Reprinted on the *People’s Forum* at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/wenyu/64/129/20011204/618330.html>.

public apology. Future generations, they argued, must learn more about this "history of blood and tears" (*xueleishi*).<sup>3</sup> *Fashion* magazine editor Zhou Xue was forced to resign. During the week of 3–10 December, over 6,000 mostly angry messages on the Zhao Wei affair were posted on the popular website Sina.com.<sup>4</sup> And words were linked with action: protestors used bricks and bottles to smash Zhao's house in Wuhu city in Anhui province.<sup>5</sup> On 10 December Zhao Wei made a public apology, which was first circulated on the internet and later broadcast on national television. Zhao declared that she had learned "an excellent lesson" about this period of history. "In the future, I will be more careful about what I say and do ... and work hard to improve myself."<sup>6</sup>

The popular reaction to Zhao's apology was mixed. Some felt it was too little too late.<sup>7</sup> Others redirected their ire elsewhere. The *Beijing Youth Daily's* Zhang Tianwei took aim at American fashion designer Richie Rich. In "Who used Zhao Wei?" Zhang declared that Rich was engaged in "postmodern creation," seeking to subvert a militaristic symbol for pacifist purposes. However, Zhang argues that "the outpouring of indignation on the internet has made the Chinese people's position clear ... We will not tolerate people offending our national sensibilities ... We want to say to that 'American designer' that ... until we Chinese have forgiven the Japanese invaders ourselves, and especially while there are still Japanese who refuse to repent, we don't want anyone else being magnanimous or tolerant on our behalf."<sup>8</sup> Zhang, clearly, is not ready to let go of his anti-Japanese rage.

Yet others went further, refusing to accept Zhao Wei's apology. At a New Year's Eve event held at Changsha on 28 December, an enraged man rushed up on stage, pushed Zhao over, and smeared excrement on her dress. This reignited the controversy. While many netizens gleefully cheered "just desserts!" (*huogai!*) in internet chatrooms, others advanced a need for restraint. Writing in the *Jiefang ribao* (*Liberation Daily*), Sima Xin argued that the expression of patriotism must be "civilized"

3. "Nanjing datusha xingxunzhe gei Zhao Wei de yifeng gongkaixin" ("An open letter from Nanjing massacre survivors to Zhao Wei"). Reprinted on the *People's Forum* at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/wenju/64/129/20011206/620666.html>.

4. "China pop star apologizes for Japan flag look-alike outfit," *Japan Economic Newswire*, 11 December, 2001.

5. "Actress sorry for wearing 'wartime Japan flag' dress," *The Straits Times* (Singapore), 11 December 2001, p. A2.

6. "Zhao Wei: Wode xingwei shanghaile henduoren de ganqing" ("Zhao Wei: my behaviour has hurt the feelings of many people"), *Beijing qingnianbao* (*Beijing Youth Daily*), 20 December 2001. Reprinted on the *People's Forum* at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/guandian/183/7087/7090/20011220/630988.html>.

7. Ren Tian, "'Ribei junqi shijian' – wuxin zhi shi?" ("The 'Japanese flag incident': an innocent mistake?"), *Nanfang dushibao* (*Southern Daily*), 11 December 2001. Reprinted on the *People's Forum* at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/guandian/27/20011211/624440.html>. Accessed 13 December 2003.

8. Zhang Tianwei, "Shei shiyongle Zhao Wei?" ("Who used Zhao Wei?"), *Beijing qingnianbao*, 12 December 2001. Reprinted on the *People's Forum* at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/guandian/27/20011212/624810.html>. Accessed 13 December 2003.

(*wenming*) – not “barbaric” (*yeman*).<sup>9</sup> Pointing to the circulation of computer-generated nude pictures of Zhao Wei on the internet, He Dong went even further in the *Beijing Youth Daily*, arguing that many in the “just desserts” crowd were “violating/raping patriotism” (*zaota aiguo zhuyi*). Much internet opinion, He Dong argued, has degenerated into the senseless “insults and intimidation” (*ruma he kongxia*) that writer Lu Xun had despaired of almost a century ago.<sup>10</sup>

During most of the controversy, Zhao Wei herself was in Xinjiang filming *Tiandi yingxiong* (*Warriors of Heaven and Earth*). Coincidentally, the film’s male protagonist, played by actor/director Jiang Wen, became the subject of another Japan controversy the following summer. On 27 June 2002 a Tianjin newspaper ran an exposé that Jiang had openly told an *Asahi Shimbun* reporter that he had been to Yasukuni Shrine several times.<sup>11</sup> Yasukuni is a shrine in Tokyo where Japanese go to honour their war dead, including executed war criminals from the Second World War. When Japanese politicians go there to worship, Chinese nationalists view it as a sign of Japanese militarism and Japan’s continuing lack of repentance for wartime aggressions against China. Some Chinese thus took offence at Jiang’s Yasukuni trip. Wang Chenhui, for instance, compared Jiang Wen’s feet to Zhao Wei’s body and declared that “History is a nation’s memory, we cannot forget it.”<sup>12</sup> In the view of many nationalists, Jiang’s “nationalist integrity” (*minzu qijie*) was now suspect.<sup>13</sup>

Many in China’s cultural elite, however, boldly and publicly defended Jiang. They argued that he had gone to Yasukuni to do research for his film *Guizi laile* (*Devils on the Doorstep*), and that “visiting” (*baifang*) Yasukuni was a far cry from “worshipping” (*canbai*) there. Author Shi Tiesheng declared that “a director trying to understand the crimes of militarism is not the same as standing on the side of militarism.” Director Tian Zhuangzhuang similarly insisted that “Jiang Wen is an artist with a clear sense of right and wrong, and an extremely strong sense of racial responsibility [*minzu zerengan*].”<sup>14</sup> Director Feng Xiaogang, “indignant”

9. Sima Xin, “Women zenyang shufa ‘aiguo riqing’?” (“How do we express ‘patriotic feelings’?”), *Jiefang ribao* (*Liberation Daily*), 9 January 2002. Reproduced on Sina.com at <http://ent.sina.com.cn/t/m/2002-01-09/69273.html>. Accessed 13 December 2003.

10. He Dong, “‘Fei lei?’ bushi aiguo zhuyi” (“‘Throwing excrement’ is not patriotism”), *Beijing qingnianbao*, 7 January 2002. Reproduced on Sina.com at <http://ent.sina.com.cn/t/m/2002-01-07/68993.html>. Accessed 1 July 2004.

11. “‘Jiang Wen qianwang jingguo shenshe’ shijian youlai” (“The origins of the ‘Jiang Wen went to Yasukuni’ affair”), *Beijing chenbao*, 1 July 2002. Reprinted at <http://www.chinese-e-book.com/1/entq/4644/2002-7-1/135at309665.htm>. Accessed 15 December 2002.

12. Wang Chenhui, “Mingren de shehui zerengan – ping Jiang Wen chu Jingguo shenshe” (“The stars’ sense of social responsibility: a critique of Jiang Wen went to Yasukuni Shrine”), *Meiri xinbao* (*Tianjin Daily*), 31 July 2002.

13. Shen Xiaoma, “Liuxing pipan” (“The popular judgment”), *Nanfang dushibao* (*Southern Daily*), 10 July 2002. Reprinted on Sina.com at <http://cul.sina.com.cn/l/d/2002-07-10/14918.html>. Accessed 16 December 2003.

14. Chen Yifei, “Qinxuhua de aiguo zhuyi bushi zhenzheng de aiguo zhuyi: gejie renshi tan ‘Jiang Wen qianwang jingguo shenshe’ ” (“Emotional patriotism is not true patriotism: everyone’s talking about ‘Jiang Wen goes to Yasukuni Shrine’”), *Beijing qingnianbao*, 1 July 2002. Online at <http://bjyouth.y.net/article.jsp?oid=743841&pageno=1>. Accessed 2 July 2004.

(*qifen*) at the anti-Jiang media coverage, claimed that it was using "Gang of Four" style methods: "The shadow of the extreme 'left' persists in the thinking and behaviour of many people today."<sup>15</sup>

One fervent anti-Japanese nationalist also came to Jiang's defence. Feng Jinhua declared that "equating 'visiting' with 'worshipping' is childish and narrow-minded." To protest against Japanese government officials worshipping at Yasukuni, on a dark night the previous summer Feng had vandalized a sculpture of a lion at the entrance to Yasukuni by writing "damn it!" (*gaisi!*) in red paint on it. Many Chinese now consider him a "national hero" (*minzu yingxiong*), and Feng has become a sought-after commentator on nationalist affairs.<sup>16</sup> Feng's defence of Jiang did not signify a softened stance on Japan; in Feng's mind, Jiang was doing research at Yasukuni to understand the Japanese better, and "to defeat the enemy, you must first understand the enemy."<sup>17</sup>

One of the ironies of the "Jiang Wen goes to Yasukuni" controversy is that Jiang the actor has long been a symbol of a virile and masculine Han nationalism – in both its anti-Japanese and anti-American guises. Jiang was the protagonist of the 1988 award-winning movie *Hong gaoliang* (*Red Sorghum*), leading peasant resistance against the hated Japanese in rural Shandong. And in the 1993 television series *Beijingren zai Niuyue* (*A Beijinger in New York*), Jiang plays Chinese businessman Wang Qiming in his triumphant battle against American businessman David McCarthy, whom he defeats in both business and love. At one point, Wang hires a buxom blond American prostitute and has his way with her with a vengeance – fulfilling the fantasies of many male Chinese nationalists.<sup>18</sup> The series was a hit.

But Jiang Wen has more recently been involved in projects that, in the eyes of some Chinese, undermine his nationalist credentials. As mentioned above, he directed the 2000 Cannes Grand Prize winning film *Devils on the Doorstep*. This is a moving wartime tale of the friendship that develops between a Japanese prisoner and a group of Chinese villagers. The PRC Bureau of Film and Television's Film Censorship Committee, however, complained that the "Chinese civilians [in the movie] don't hate the Japanese [prisoner]," but instead are "as close as brothers" (*qin ru xiongdi*) with him.<sup>19</sup> The film was never publicly shown in China. Jiang's exploration of the two sides' common humanity clearly

15. Yu Shaowen, "Zhendui 'Jingguo shenshe' shijian Feng Xiaogang ti Jiang Wen ma bu ping" ("On the 'Yasukuni' incident, Feng Xiaogang comes to Jiang Wen's defence"), *Beijing qingnianbao*, 2 July 2002. Available at <http://bjyouth.yinet.com/article.jsp?oid=749158>. Accessed 24 December 2003.

16. Shen Xiaoma, "The popular judgment."

17. Wu Fei, "Feng Jinhua shuo: meiyou biyao weici gongji Jiang Wen" ("Feng Jinhua says: there's no need to attack Jiang Wen over this"), *Beijing qingnianbao*, 1 July 2002. Available at <http://bjyouth.yinet.com/article.jsp?oid=743855>. Accessed 14 December 2003.

18. Translated by Geremie Barmé. See "To screw foreigners is patriotic: China's avante-garde nationalists," in Jonathan Unger (ed.), *Chinese Nationalism* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), p. 184.

19. Film Censorship Committee of the Bureau of Film and Television Broadcasting 2000. My thanks to Rebecca McKinnon for her help in providing me with a copy of this document.

threatened the censors' black-and-white vision of heroic Chinese resistance against the hated Japanese. And in *Warriors of Heaven and Earth*, in which Jiang co-stars with Zhao Wei, the Japanese villain (played by actor Nakai Kiichi) turns out to be quite human, longing to return to his mother back in Japan.<sup>20</sup> Jiang's embrace of humanism does not appear to sit well with the parochial nationalism of many of his compatriots.

*"Nationalist Fanatics!" A Liberal Counters the Japan-Bashers*

Ma Licheng went to Japan in January 2002, and his "new thinking" article is an intensely personal reaction to his experiences in China and Japan over the course of the year. The article should also be understood in the context of his earlier writings promoting reform and opposing parochial nationalism.

Ma is best known for 1998's *Jiaofeng (Crossing Swords)*, which he co-authored with fellow *People's Daily* writer Ling Zhijun. *Crossing Swords* is primarily an insider's account of the mid-1990s rearguard battle that reformers fought against the "old leftists" who were trying to impede reform.<sup>21</sup> The book was a success, selling an estimated two million copies in 1998.<sup>22</sup> And it established Ma's reputation as a liberal defender of reform.

In 1999 Ling and Ma issued a second book, *Huhan (Outcry)*, which turned its attention from the old leftists in the leadership to the new leftists in society: the propagators of China's new populist nationalism. The focus of one section is on the young "fourth generation" producers of the "China can say no" books popular in 1996–97. Such emotional nationalism, Ling and Ma warn, can only hurt China.<sup>23</sup> Like *Crossing Swords*, *Outcry* can be seen as a liberal defence of "reform and opening" against its critics.

Ma opens his "new thinking" article with a discussion of the Zhao Wei affair. He is particularly disturbed by an April 2002 *Beijing Youth Daily* interview with the young man who had attacked Zhao with faeces on stage in Changsha. According to the interview, 31-year-old "Mr Wu" has no regrets: "I don't believe that I did anything inappropriate." This prompts Ma to ask: "When will our countrymen overcome such irrational impulses?"<sup>24</sup>

20. For more on *Warriors of Heaven and Earth*, see <http://www.warriors-movie.com/en/home.html>.

21. Ma Licheng and Ling Zhijun, *Jiaofeng (Crossed Swords)* (Beijing: Jinri Zhongguo chubanshe, 1998). For a fine English language review, see Joseph Fewsmith, "Crossed swords: a true account of the three periods of ideological liberation," *Foreign Policy*, No. 113 (Winter 1998/99), pp. 107–110.

22. Hiroyoshi Sugiyama, "Chinese engage in war of words on nationalism," *The Daily Yomiuri* (Tokyo), 17 February 1999.

23. Ling Zhijun and Ma Licheng, *Huhan (Outcry)* (Guangzhou: Guangzhou chubanshe, 1999). For a brief discussion in English, see Sugiyama, "Chinese engage in war of words."

24. Ma Licheng, "DuiRi guanxi xinsiwei" ("New thinking on relations with Japan"), *Zhanlue yu guanli (Strategy and Management)*, No. 6 (2002), p. 41. The full text is widely available on the internet. See, for example, the copy on the *People's Net* at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/guandian/1033/2015189.html>. Accessed 17 December 2003.

Ma then argues that the Zhao Wei affair was not an isolated incident: an unhealthy anti-Japanese hatred is widespread. Slurs like "little Japs" (*xiao Riben*) and "devils" (*guizi*) are pervasive in Chinese internet chatrooms. Jiang Wen was also widely denounced as a "traitor." A Shenzhen bar even posted a sign reading "Japanese not welcome" as a protest against the Japanese history textbooks "revisionism" issue. Given that Chinese had previously suffered the humiliation of the infamous "Chinese and dogs not welcome" sign at a park in Shanghai's foreign legation,<sup>25</sup> Ma finds the anti-Japanese sign particularly galling. "How did [the Shanghai sign] make us feel? Now that we're stronger, how can we treat others the same way?"<sup>26</sup>

Ma proceeds to a broader critique of the popular nationalism that emerged in the 1990s. As in *Outcry*, he focuses on the "arrogance" (*zida*) and "xenophobia" (*paiwai*) of parochial "say no" nationalists. Arrogance, Ma argues, is revealed in their frequent assertions that "the 21st century will be China's" and that America will collapse by 2010. Such talk, Ma maintains, is not patriotic; it instead "reflects ignorance and backwardness."<sup>27</sup>

Xenophobia is perhaps an even greater threat to reform. Ma is concerned about recent books that assert that globalization is an evil American plot against China. *Quanqiuhua yinjingxia de Zhongguo zhi lu* (*China's Road in the Shadow of Globalization*) advocates a closed economy, arguing that the American government seeks to exterminate the Chinese race. *Weixie Zhongguo de yinbi zhanzheng* (*The Covert War that Threatens China*) similarly maintains that globalization is part of America's "soft war" that seeks to imprison China. Such xenophobic impulses, Mao further maintains, are beginning to constrain policy makers. He notes that vice-trade minister Long Yongtu has said that his greatest pressure during the 1999 World Trade Organization negotiations with the United States came not from his foreign negotiating counterparts but from domestic opinion that cursed him as a "traitor." Referring to the xenophobic Boxer rebels of 1900, Ma laments that "the spirit of the Boxers has returned, seeking to lock the country away" from "corrupting" foreign influences.<sup>28</sup> After this lengthy diagnosis of the problem, Ma's solution is simple: "We need the generosity of a great and victorious nation, and do not need to be excessively harsh [*keke*] with Japan." Arguing that "the apology question has been resolved," Ma urges both Chinese and Japanese to "overcome parochial views" and "look forward" in their bilateral relationship.<sup>29</sup>

Ma's controversial position that the "history question" be put to rest quickly came under fire. A summer 2003 *War of Resistance* contained

25. See Robert A. Bickers and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, "Shanghai's 'dogs and Chinese not admitted' sign: legend, history and contemporary symbol," *The China Quarterly*, No. 142 (June 1995).

26. Ma Licheng, "New thinking," p. 45.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.* pp. 45–46.

29. *Ibid.* p. 47.

over a dozen essays on the “history question in Sino-Japanese relations.” The vast majority disagreed with Ma. In “The confused logic of the new thinking,” Bai Jingfan claims to have been “extremely shocked” upon reading Ma’s article. Bai contends Ma has confused cause and effect. It is not the Chinese public’s reaction to the Zhao Wei affair but the influence of the Japanese right that is worrying. It is not the Chinese but the Japanese right that is excessively nationalistic. It is not the Chinese but the Japanese who have been too harsh.<sup>30</sup> The problem, in sum, lies not with China but solely with the Japanese: “Japan has not returned China’s beneficence.”<sup>31</sup>

CASS Japan hand Feng Zhaokui, who was extremely active in the “new thinking” debate, also strongly disagreed with Ma on the history question, arguing that it was far from resolved. In an autumn 2003 *Strategy and Management* article “Another discussion of the new thinking on Japan policy,” Feng maintains that the history question is “difficult, complex, emotional and long-term.” It is difficult because feelings of “hatred” (*chouhen*) are “deep-rooted” (*genshen digu*), and will not be easily forgotten. It is complex because of historical legacies like chemical weapons left in China after the Second World War and the Taiwan question. It is emotional because the Japanese right is constantly picking at a Chinese scar that has yet to heal, arousing the righteous indignation of the Chinese people. And finally, because of its difficulty and complexity, the history question is likely to persist for a long time.<sup>32</sup> Feng, previously seen by some as soft on Japan, was no longer in the hot seat; Ma now held the hot potato of being scapegoated as a “Japan-lover” (*qinRi*).

Bai and Feng’s critiques were mild compared to Ma’s treatment on the internet. He was repeatedly called a “traitor” (both *hanjian* and *maiguozei*). His address and phone number were posted on the web along with a call to burn down his house.<sup>33</sup> In “Ma Licheng, we say no to you!” posted on the *Xinhuanet Forum*, an anonymous netizen argues that “Devils are devils! ... How can you be ‘friends’ with them?” The essay concludes with the line: “Ma Licheng, it doesn’t matter how much you kiss Japanese ass, we have only one thing to say to you: the devils will be back!”<sup>34</sup> Ma even received death threats. For instance, “Liufeng3000”

30. Here Bai digresses with a short but self-righteous account of the history of Japanese “harshness” towards China, beginning with the Sino-Japanese Jaiwu War and the humiliating Treaty of Shimonoseki of 1895.

31. Bai Jingfan, “Luoji hunluan de ‘xin siwei’ ” (“The confused logic of the ‘new thinking’ ”), *KangRi zhanzheng yanjiu (Journal of the War of Resistance Against Japan)* No. 3 (2003), pp. 198–202.

32. Feng Zhaokui, “Zailun duiRi guanxi xin siwei” (“Another discussion of the new thinking on Japan policy”), *Zhanlue yu guanli*, No. 5 (2003), p. 78.

33. Liu Xiaobiao, “Hezhe aiguo, hezhe haiguo?” (“Who loves their country, and who harms their country?”), *Waitan huabao (The Bund)*, 14 August 2003. Available at <http://www.peacehall.com/news/gb/pubvp/2003/08/200308171503.shtml>. Accessed 1 July 2004.

34. “Ma Licheng, women dui ni shuo bu!” (“Ma Licheng, we say no to you!”), *Xinhuanet Forum*, 17 December 2002. Reprinted at <http://www.phoenixtv.com/home/zhuanxi/xwshj/zrgxxlksk/zrgxxlkskxgbd/200212/25/15014.html>. Accessed 17 December 2003.



wrote "Ma Licheng, don't let me see you, because if I do, I will kill you" on the NetEase bbs on 27 September 2003. Twelve netizens later clicked "I agree"; none clicked "I disagree."<sup>35</sup> In the summer of 2003, Ma requested and received early retirement from the *People's Daily*, left Beijing, and took a job working for Phoenix TV in Hong Kong.

*Balancing Against the Hegemon: A Realist Supports Rapprochement with Japan*

A few scholars publicly and courageously came to Ma's defence. The most prominent among them was Shi Yinhong of the School of International Relations at People's University. Shi issued a series of articles in 2003 supporting Ma's position. The first and most influential appeared in the second 2003 issue of *Strategy and Management*. Shi opens "Sino-Japanese *rapprochement* and the 'diplomatic revolution'" by praising Ma's courage, and agreeing with him that the recent rapid increase in Sino-Japanese enmity is not just disheartening but actually "quite dangerous."<sup>36</sup>

It quickly becomes clear, however, that Shi approaches the problem from a very different angle from Ma. Shi views Sino-Japanese relations from the perspective of geopolitics – the broad international balance of power. "It will be extremely beneficial to China," he writes, "if, through improving relations with Japan, China can improve its security environment and its diplomatic position."<sup>37</sup> Viewing American power as "historically unprecedented," Shi worries, from a realist "power transitions" perspective, that the United States will utilize its hegemonic status to obstruct China's rise.<sup>38</sup>

Shi therefore advocates a cool, dispassionate realpolitik reminiscent of Henry Kissinger. Just as Kissinger proposed that the United States seek *rapprochement* with China to balance against the Soviets in the early 1970s, Shi proposes that China seek *rapprochement* with Japan to balance against the United States today. Specifically, he suggests that China do five things. First, Chinese should ease up on the history question in the bilateral relationship, and accept Japanese apologies for the time being. Secondly, China should continue to strengthen economic and trade relations with Japan, and reduce economic and trade relations with the United States and the European Union accordingly. The top leadership of the Chinese government, furthermore, should publicly "thank Japan for the large amounts of ODA that Japan has provided to China since the beginning of reform and opening." Thirdly, Chinese should stop making

35. See <http://bbs.netease.com/news/readthread.php?forumcode=22&postid=64840&pageid=1>. Accessed 17 December 2003.

36. Shi Yinhong, "ZhongRi jiejin yu 'waijiao geming'" ("Sino-Japanese *rapprochement* and the 'diplomatic revolution'"), *Zhanlue yu guanli*, No. 2 (2003), pp. 71, 72. The full text is widely available on the internet. See, for example, the copy on the *People's Net* at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/guandian/1033/2015190.html>. Accessed 18 December 2003.

37. *Ibid.* p. 73.

38. *Ibid.* p. 72.

exaggerated claims about the rise of Japanese militarism. Fourthly, China should welcome Japan's full participation in regional and international politics as a "great power." Finally, China should support Japanese efforts to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. These five concessions, Shi insists, are a small price to pay for a "diplomatic revolution" that would greatly benefit China's national interest.<sup>39</sup>

Shi expands on these arguments in two subsequent articles. In the summer 2003 *War of Resistance* forum on the "history question" mentioned above, he contributed a dissenting essay entitled "The history question and the great strategic balance." Shi reiterates the danger that increasing Sino-Japanese enmity poses for China, and expands on his view of history: "We cannot forget history, but we cannot stagnate in history either." Because the influence of domestic opinion on policy-making is growing, China's leadership faces the daunting but imperative challenge of "guiding and adjusting" (*yindao he tiaokong*) popular opinion. "It is vital," Shi concludes, "that our policies be based upon strategy and not on emotions."<sup>40</sup> He reiterates these points in "Strategic thinking in Sino-Japanese relations," which appeared in an autumn issue of the influential *World Economics and International Politics*. Because the history question is becoming a bigger issue in domestic opinion, and thus putting increasing pressure on policy makers, there is an urgent need to better guide popular opinion. "We cannot slip into emotion," Shi pleads, "but must focus on strategic relations."<sup>41</sup>

Like Ma before him, Shi quickly came under heavy and sustained attack. One of his first and most ferocious critics was the *People's Daily's* Lin Zhibo, who contributed "Questioning the 'new thinking on Japan policy': a discussion with Professor Shi Yinhong" to the "history question" forum in the summer *War of Resistance* discussed above. A longer and less courteous version appeared on the *People's Net* (*Renmin wang*) online. Lin ridicules Shi's core argument that *rapprochement* with Japan will help balance against the United States. "US-Japan relations are like those between a master and a servant [*zhucong guanxi*]," Lin asserts, so "there is no way that Japan will improve Japan-China relations to counterbalance the US." America, furthermore, will not sit by and allow that to happen. It was America, after all, that Lin claims let the Japanese emperor and militarists off the hook after the Second World War, triggered the Diaoyu Islands dispute, and let Japanese politics turn to the right.<sup>42</sup> In the extended *People's Net* version, Lin adds that America was

39. *Ibid.* pp. 73–74.

40. Shi Yinhong, "Lishi wenti yu dazhanlue quanheng" ("The history question and the great strategic balance"), *Journal of the War of Resistance Against Japan (KangRi zhanzheng yanjiu)*, No. 3 (2003), pp. 191–195.

41. Shi Yinhong, "Strategic Thinking in Sino-Japanese Relations" ("Guanyu ZhongRi guanxi de zhanluexing sicao"), *World Economics and International Politics (Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi)*, No. 9 (2003), pp. 10–11.

42. Lin Zhibo, "Questioning the 'New Thinking on Japan Policy': A Discussion with Professor Shi Yinhong" ("DuiRi guanxi xin siwei' zhiyi – yu Shi Yinhong jiaoshou shangqie"), *KangRi zhanzheng yanjiu*, No. 3 (2003), p. 216.

"secretly glad" (*tou zhe le de*) that the Japanese right denied the Nanjing massacre, revised history textbooks, and that Japanese prime ministers were worshipping at Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>43</sup> Lin does not reveal his sources of mischievous American glee.

Lin is even more indignant about Shi's "irresponsible" attitude towards the history question: "people have memories, and a nation's memory cannot be erased." "Instead of asking the Japanese government to restrain its ugly behaviours," Lin complains, Shi "asks the Chinese government to be tolerant and magnanimous."<sup>44</sup> In the internet version, Lin elaborates on such "ugly behaviours," citing Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi's worshipping at Yasukuni and his statement, while visiting US President Bush at Bush's Crawford Ranch, that "if China will not compromise on the Diaoyu Islands issue, Japan will make China regret it." Lin's reaction is fierce: "These are the threats of a thief or a hoodlum. Spoken at his master's ranch ... they are like a dog barking and biting."<sup>45</sup>

Not everyone agreed with Lin's criticisms, however, and a few supported Ma and Shi's positions. For instance, writing in a late summer *Strategy and Management*, Qinghua University international relations expert Xue Li argued both that the "history question" be shelved, and that China pursue its national interest in reconciling with Japan. "Chinese should swallow a bitter fruit and, for the sake of the national interest, seek to overcome the history question." Unlike the Germans, Xue asserts, the Japanese lack "independent thinking" and are unable to easily change their views of the past; the Shinto and Bushido traditions are simply too strong. As a practical matter, therefore, Chinese simply cannot expect rapid Japanese progress on the history issue. However, Xue argues that Chinese need not worry about the history question because the influence of the Japanese right is limited, and Japan is not likely to become a militarist country. "I believe that we should moderate our reactions to the history question," Xue writes, "and that the government should cultivate a national consciousness that is friendly towards Japan, educating the people about the [limited] role of the Japanese right, and explain to them the great contributions that Japan has made to Chinese economic construction." Against Lin and others who oppose conciliation, Xue argues, "Not only will China's generosity not harm China's national dignity, but it will greatly promote economic, political and regional co-operation between the two countries, and will not be without benefits for resolving the Taiwan question. [Conversely,] a 'rigid' Chinese attitude will be likely to lead Japan to rely even more on the US to balance against China."<sup>46</sup>

43. Lin Zhibo, "DuiRi guanxi xin siwei' zai zhiyi - yu Shi Yinhong jiaoshou shangqie" ("Another questioning of the 'new thinking on Japan policy': a discussion with Professor Shi Yinhong"), *The People's Net* at <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/guandian/183/8456/8457/2017423.html>. Accessed 18 December 2003.

44. Lin Zhibo, "Questioning the 'new thinking,'" p. 217.

45. Lin Zhibo, "Another questioning of the 'new thinking'."

46. Xue Li, "ZhongRi guanxi nengfou chao yue lishi wenti?" ("Can Sino-Japanese relations overcome the history question?"), *Zhanlue yu guanli*, No. 4 (2003), pp. 28-33.

Many academic participants in the “new thinking” debate claimed to take the middle ground, concurring with some of Ma and Shi’s views while disagreeing with others. Two articles in an autumn 2003 *World Economics and International Politics* were typical. Pang Zhongying, a well-known public intellectual, argues that the “new thinking” is on the right basic track on the history question, but misguided on geopolitics. “It is vital,” Pang contends, “for Chinese to distinguish the Japan of the first half of the 20th century from the Japan of the second half of the century, which has democratized, is peaceful and has made economic contributions.” Rather than risk criticism by directly saying that China should put the past to rest, Pang invokes the “Oriental wisdom” of “facing the future.” Chinese and Japanese must learn to accentuate the positive: rather than mutual opposition and conflict, they must develop mutual respect and support.

On the security issue, however, Pang disagrees with Shi’s view of geopolitics. “There is no way to insert a wedge [*xiezi*] between Japan and the US,” Pang contends. The US–Japan alliance has only strengthened under the Bush and Koizumi administrations, and the idea of “Allying with Japan against America” (*lianRi kangMei*) is farfetched. Indeed, Pang suggests that the best way to improve Sino-Japanese relations is to improve Sino-American relations.<sup>47</sup>

Ling Xingguang of the CASS Institute of World Economics and International Politics also claims middle ground in “Correct strategy, incorrect tactics.” Ling agrees with Ma and Shi on seven points, but disagrees with them on five others. Overall, however, the negatives clearly outweigh the positives: “Sino-Japanese relations are in a period of transition, and will not be very smooth for five to ten years.”<sup>48</sup>

47. Pang Zhongying, “Duili jiage haishi hezuo shenhua? ZhongRi guanxi xuyao yuanjian zhushi” (“Increasing co-operation or confrontation? Foresightedness is needed in dealing with Sino-Japanese relations”), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi* (*World Economics and International Politics*), No. 9 (2003), pp. 15–17.

48. Specifically, Ling agrees that: America is good at manipulating contradictions in Sino-Japanese relations; Chinese should overcome parochial nationalist emotions; China needs a cool, objective analysis of the bilateral relationship; Chinese shouldn’t overdo talk of Japanese militarism, which is not likely for four reasons (the Japanese people oppose it, the international community won’t allow it, China is strong and the US will not tolerate it); no more conspiracy theories about Japan; the history problem should not be allowed to obstruct Sino-Japanese strategic co-operation; and finally, it is historically inevitable that Japan will become a great political nation. Ling disagrees on the following: the history problem is primarily Japan’s responsibility, not China’s, and Ma is wrong to say that China has been too “harsh” (*keke*) and to assert that Japan has already sufficiently apologized.; Ma claims that a “new Asian era” has dawned, but he’s wrong as the Japanese have rebuffed China’s proposal for a north-east Asian free trade area; on strategic relations, Shi’s idea of improving Sino-Japanese relations to counter the US is wishful thinking; Japan’s ODA to China serves Japan’s own national interest and there is no need for our leaders to repeatedly thank Japan for it; and finally, Shi overestimates American power in his analysis of the “power game.” See Ling Xingguang, “Zhanlue duitou zhanshu qiantuo – ping Ma Licheng he Shi Yinhong de lingpian wenzhang” (“Correct strategy, incorrect tactics: comments on the two articles by Ma Licheng and Shi Yinhong”), *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi*, No. 9 (2003), pp. 17–21.

*Japanese Mustard Gas, Chinese Prostitutes and Popular Passions in 2003–2004 China*

What impact did this lively academic debate on Japan policy have on elite and popular opinion and behaviour? Rather than embracing the “new thinking,” China’s political elite distanced itself from it. In several late 2003 articles, CASS senior Japan hand Feng Zhaokui repeatedly argued the importance of distinguishing between academic debate and official policy. Feng appears to have been representing the elite in an effort to distance itself from pundits like Ma Licheng and Shi Yinhong. “The new thinking,” Feng wrote in a late 2003 *Strategy and Management*, “is not a ‘revolutionary change’ in the Chinese government’s Japan policy.”<sup>49</sup> Because many analysts believed that both Ma and Shi had political connections within the new Hu Jintao leadership, some – including many China watchers in Japan – had speculated that the “new thinking” represented a “trial balloon” from Hu on Japan policy.<sup>50</sup> This view, Feng asserts, is incorrect. The *People’s Daily’s* Lin Zhibo went further, arguing that the “new thinking” actually harmed China by giving Japanese hawks the mistaken impression that China is soft and can be pushed around.<sup>51</sup> It appears, in sum, that China’s elite chose to distance themselves from the “new thinking” by academics.

Even more strikingly, the “new thinking” did not stem the swelling tide of anti-Japanese popular opinion in 2003–2004 China. Indeed, the summer and autumn of 2003 witnessed a remarkable flurry of anti-Japanese activity across China. In June, internet activists organized the first ever mainland Chinese trip to the contested Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands east of China.<sup>52</sup> In July, nationalists organized a web-based petition to deny Japan a Beijing–Shanghai high-speed rail link contract. In August, rather than celebrate the 25th anniversary of the 1978 Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship, Chinese and Japanese diplomats spent much of the month trying to control the damage done by the “4 August mustard gas incident” in which one Chinese died and dozens were injured in Qiqihar in China’s north-east. Over a million Chinese signed a second petition demanding that Japan resolve the chemical weapons issue. In September, the revelation of a sex party involving hundreds of Japanese businessmen and Chinese prostitutes in the south-east city of Zhu Hai sparked another flurry of anti-Japanese invective on the internet. And in October, a risqué skit by three Japanese students and one of their teachers at North-western

49. Feng Zhaokui, “Zailun duiRi guanxi xin siwei” (“Another discussion of the new thinking on Japan policy”), *Zhanlue yu guanli*, No. 5 (2003), p. 83. See also Feng Zhaokui, “The keywords of Sino-Japanese relations,” p. 37.

50. The *Yomiuri Shimbun*, for instance, reported that “A source close to the Chinese government said Ma’s essay came against the background of Cao Qinghong’s comment about thinking highly of Japan ... Cao ... is known as a leading advocate of improving ties between China and Japan. He dared to visit Japan this year, despite objections over Koizumi’s visit to Yasukuni Shrine in the spring.” See Hiroyuki Sugiyama, “People’s Daily slams anti-Japan rhetoric,” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 14 December 2002.

51. Lin Zhibo, “Questioning the ‘new thinking’,” p. 219.

52. I put “Diaoyu” first not to take China’s side in the dispute, but simply because I approach the issue from a Chinese perspective.

University in Xian led to a 7,000-strong demonstration on campus and nationwide condemnation. The east, north-east, south-east, and north-west: anti-Japanese incidents seemed to be everywhere. As Hong Kong's *Sing Pao Daily* put it in December: "Chinese feelings of hatred for the Japanese [*chouRi qingxu*] are rising without interruption"<sup>53</sup>

On 23 June 2003, 13 members of the Action Committee for Defending the Diaoyu Islands (ten mainlanders, the first to ever participate in such a trip, and three Hong Kongers) set off from a port in Zhejiang province to China's east and arrived at the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands the next day. The weather was rough and they were circled by Japanese coastguard ships. In the end, they were forced to abandon their plan to land on the islands. They did, however, burn a Japanese flag before leaving. Both Beijing and Tokyo were forced to take tough stands. An MFA spokesman declared that "Chinese sovereignty over the Islands is indisputable."<sup>54</sup>

The next month, a few enterprising young nationalists put together a web-based petition calling on the government *not* to award a \$12 billion contract to Japan for the construction of a high speed Beijing–Shanghai rail link. One of their logos, which contains the image of a clenched fist evocative of socialist propaganda, reads: "Heaven and Earth will not tolerate traitors. We *don't* want the Japanese *bullet train*. We refuse the use of Japanese products for the Beijing–Shanghai line." Volunteers wore T-shirts declaring "We don't want the bullet train."<sup>55</sup> In just one week, the organizers gathered 90,000 signatures, which they then submitted to the Ministry of Railways in Beijing on 29 July. Feng Jinhua, one of the petition organizers, declared that this popular pressure had a "clear impact."<sup>56</sup> Chikage Ogi, Japan's minister of transport, was given a cool reception when she visited Beijing at the beginning of August and was unable to meet Prime Minister Wen Jiabao or any railway ministry officials. Press in both China and Japan described it as a snub.<sup>57</sup> The rail contract decision was suddenly deferred.

On 4 August 2003 construction workers in Qiqihar uncovered and mistakenly ruptured five drums of mustard gas left from the wartime Japanese occupation. Dozens were injured and at least one man died.

53. "Wangmin hu taohui Zhongguoren zunyan" ("Netizens call for a restoration of respect for the Chinese people"), *Sing Pao Daily* (Hong Kong), 1 November 2003. Available at <http://www.singpao.com/20031101/international/470629.html>. Accessed 19 December 2003.

54. Chloe Lai, "Activists abandon Diaoyu protest: surrounded by Japanese coastguard vessels in rough seas, the seasick group gives up and decides to return home," *South China Morning Post*, 24 June 2003, p. 3.

55. Deng Fangsheng, "Ruhe pingxi chouRi qingxu?" ("How can we calm feelings of hatred for Japan?"), *Lianhe zaobao* (Singapore), 7 November 2003. Available at [http://www.zaobao.com/special/china/sino\\_jp/pages/sino\\_jp071103a.html](http://www.zaobao.com/special/china/sino_jp/pages/sino_jp071103a.html). Accessed 2 July 2004.

56. "Wangluo minzuzhuyi xiankai Zhongguo minzuzhuyi xin pianzhang" ("Internet nationalism starts a new Chapter in Chinese nationalism"), *Guoji xianqu daobao* (*International Herald Tribune*) (Beijing), 18 September 2003. Reprinted on the "September 18th Incident" webpage at [http://cyc69.cycnet.com:8090/xuezhuzhu/918/content.jsp?ar\\_id=8334&subchannel\\_id=33](http://cyc69.cycnet.com:8090/xuezhuzhu/918/content.jsp?ar_id=8334&subchannel_id=33). Accessed 23 December 2003.

57. Joseph Kahn, "Relic of war adds to strain in Beijing ties with Tokyo," *New York Times*, 12 August 2003, p. A3.

Newspapers carried photographs of the injured and their chemical burns. The popular Chinese reaction to the news was fast and furious. Internet chatrooms were filled with anti-Japanese invective. A million signatures were gathered on a new petition demanding that the Japanese government thoroughly resolve the chemical weapons issue.<sup>58</sup> It was delivered to the Japanese embassy in Beijing on 4 September as Chinese and Japanese diplomats were negotiating compensation for the victims of the Qiqihar accident. Petition organizer Lu Yunfei said that they sought to "put pressure on the Japanese government."<sup>59</sup>

Just two weeks later, a group of 400 Japanese businessmen hired as many as 500 local Chinese prostitutes for a weekend sex party from 16 to 18 September at the Zhu Hai International Conference Hotel. Racy reports in the national press about the "selling spring" (*maichun*) or "prostitution incident" sparked a righteous furore in internet chatrooms. The trope of China as a raped woman, long suppressed under Mao, had re-emerged in the late 1990s. And 18 September was the 72nd anniversary of the 1931 Mukden Incident which led to the Japanese occupation of Manchuria. In the view of many Chinese nationalists, the Japanese businessmen were symbolically raping China. Some 90 per cent of the respondents to a Sohu.net poll believed that the Japanese intended to humiliate China.<sup>60</sup> To placate domestic opinion, the Chinese government sought to take a firm stance. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared the incident "an extremely odious criminal case," and called on the Japanese government to educate its people better. Over a dozen Chinese pimps and prostitutes involved in the incident were later sentenced to prison terms. Two received life sentences.<sup>61</sup>

In October, the foreign language department at North-western University (*Xibei daxue*) in Xian threw a party. As part of the entertainment, three Japanese students and one of their Japanese teachers performed a skit. Wearing red bras over their t-shirts, they pranced around stage throwing the stuffing at their audience. In Japan, such skits are apparently seen as humorous; in China, it was seen as lewd and offensive. And because the performers were Japanese, the personal quickly became political.<sup>62</sup> The Japanese students apologized, but were expelled and received death threats. Thousands of Chinese demonstrated on campus and through the city, shouting "Boycott Japanese goods!" (*dizhi Rihuo*)

58. For more on anti-Japanese internet activists, see the interview that Shanghai's *Waitan huabao* (*The Bund*) did with organizer Lu Yunfei, "Lu Yunfei he tade 'aiguo zhe tongmeng wang'" ("Lu Yunfei and his 'internet alliance of patriots'"). Available at <http://www.bundpic.com/pap/20030925/a21.htm>. Accessed 23 December 2003. In English, see the interview that Charles Hutzler did with Lu Yunfei at my suggestion, and after reading an earlier draft of this ms. Hutzler, "Yuppies in China protest via the web," *Wall Street Journal*, 19 March 2004, p. 1.

59. "Internet nationalism starts a new chapter in Chinese nationalism."

60. Joseph Kahn, "China angered by reported orgy involving Japanese tourists," *New York Times*, 30 September 2003, p. A5.

61. "China jails 14 on sex party for Japanese," *The Associated Press*, 18 December 2003.

62. See Jonathan Watts, "Storm over d-cups rocks Sino-Japanese relations," *The Guardian*, 13 November 2003.

and “Japanese dogs, get out!” (*Ribengou gun*).<sup>63</sup> A Japanese flag was publicly burned outside the foreign students’ dormitory. The *New York Times*’ Nicholas Kristof described the scene as a “mob ... rampage.”<sup>64</sup> While some made the farfetched suggestion that the Chinese government manipulated the incident to gain bargaining leverage over Japan in ODA negotiations, *The Guardian*’s Jonathan Watts was more thoughtful: “The real fear should not be that the protests were officially orchestrated but that they were spontaneous expressions of fury by students who still regard Japan as an enemy despite decades of normalized relations, billions in economic aid, and a supposedly more liberal education.”<sup>65</sup>

There were no major incidents comparable to Qiqihar, Zhu Hai and Xian in the first half of 2004, but two events in August revealed that anti-Japanese emotions continued to bubble just beneath the surface of Chinese popular opinion. During the Asian Cup soccer tournament, held in China at the beginning of August, Chinese fans in Chongqing, Jinan and Beijing hurled insults at the Japanese team (and bottles at their team bus). During the Cup final between China and Japan in Beijing, which Japan won 3–1, Chinese fans reportedly chanted “Kill! Kill! Kill!” and “May a big sword decapitate the Japanese!”<sup>66</sup> Japanese opinion was outraged, and Prime Minister Koizumi lectured Chinese fans that they should improve their behaviour – a striking role reversal following the MFA’s lecturing of the Japanese following the Zhu Hai prostitution incident the previous year.

At the end of the month, the Chinese ministry of railways quietly granted the multibillion *yuan* train contract to a consortium of largely Japanese companies. Within a single day, cyber-nationalist Lu Yunfei’s Patriot Alliance Web ([www.1931-9-18.org](http://www.1931-9-18.org)) had collected 68,733 e-signatures on a petition seeking to reverse the Ministry’s decision. The popular response was so overwhelming that the Party was forced to shut the entire website down the very next day.<sup>67</sup> In the short term, this coercive tactic was effective, curtailing popular opposition to the Party’s Japan policy. But in the long run it is risky, provoking anti-CCP resentment and undermining the Party’s nationalist claims to legitimacy.

What best explains this puzzle of increasing anti-Japanese enmity at a time of expanding economic relations? After all, liberals have long argued that increasing interdependence promotes peace. In brief, today’s China is no longer Mao’s China. After a quarter of a century of unprecedented economic growth, most Chinese no longer fear Japan, and a long suppressed anger at Japan has resurfaced. As I have argued at length elsewhere, the Maoist “victor narrative” about heroic Chinese

63. “Xian kangRi shiwei yuyan yulie” (“The Xian anti-Japanese demonstrations get fiercer and fiercer”), *Sing Pao Daily* (Hong Kong), 1 November 2003. See <http://www.singpao.com/20031101/international/470627.html>. Accessed 2 July 2004.

64. Nicholas D. Kristof, “The China threat?” *The New York Times*, 20 December 2003.

65. Watts, “Storm over d-cups.”

66. Jim Yardley, “In soccer loss, a glimpse of China’s rising ire at Japan,” *New York Times*, 9 August 2004.

67. Jane Cai, “Patriots’ website closed because of railway protest; anti-Japan stance over bullet-train bids too sensitive for authorities,” *South China Morning Post*, 1 September 2004.



victories over Western and Japanese imperialism, dominant from the 1950s until the 1980s, has been challenged since the mid-1990s by a new "victim narrative" about Chinese suffering during the "century of humiliation" (*bainian guochi*). This traumatic re-encounter with long suppressed suffering has understandably generated anger – an anger that has been directed primarily at Japan. Why? To most Chinese, the Japanese are the paradigmatic "devils" (*guizi*)<sup>68</sup> – not just because of the brutality of the Japanese invasion of China and the sheer numbers of Chinese killed by Japanese troops, but also because of an ethical anger with earlier origins. The perceived injustice of "little brother" Japan's impertinent behaviour towards "big brother" China, starting with China's loss in the Sino-Japanese Jiawu War and the humiliating Treaty of Shimonoseki of 1895, and running through the insulting "21 Demands" of 1915 and on to Second World War atrocities like the "Rape of Nanking," gives anti-Japanese anger in China both "higher" ethical and "lower" visceral dimensions. The complexity and depth of these anti-Japanese sentiments helps sustain them, setting them apart from other more fleeting anti-foreign feelings.<sup>69</sup>

#### *Sino-Japanese Enmity and the 21st-Century Asia-Pacific*

In a 2003 *Foreign Affairs*, Evan Medeiros and Taylor Fravel argue that "China's new diplomacy" is marked by a self-confident and mature pursuit of China's national interest.<sup>70</sup> While I concur with their broad thesis – overall, China's diplomacy has become more proactive and less reactive – China's Japan policy may be the exception that proves the rule. Where Korea and the South-East Asian nations invaded by Japan during the Second World War have all reached a working understanding of the place of the "history question" in their bilateral relations with Japan, it remains an ongoing and volatile issue in Sino-Japanese relations, inhibiting the ability of Chinese diplomats to pursue a pragmatic Japan policy.<sup>71</sup> In his 1989 *China Eyes Japan*, Allen Whiting argued that negative images of Japan thwarted China's interest in closer bilateral relations in the 1980s.<sup>72</sup> More recently, Gilbert Rozman has similarly argued that "public distrust" in the late 1990s Sino-Japanese relationship was "growing out of control."<sup>73</sup> Today, at the onset of the 21st century, Chinese animosity towards Japan is unquestionably out of control, and it

68. Unlike others "devils," such as "Western devils" (*Yang guizi*) or "British devils" (*Yingguo guizi*), which require specification, "Japanese devils" (*Riben guizi*) is redundant; "guizi" unmodified is commonly understood to mean "Japanese devils."

69. For an extended discussion, see Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2004).

70. Evan Medeiros and Taylor Fravel, "China's new diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 6 (November/December 2003), pp. 22–35.

71. Xue Li has proposed that China learn from its Asian neighbours on the "history question." See "Can Sino-Japanese relations overcome the history question?" p. 30.

72. Allen Whiting, *China Eyes Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

73. Gilbert Rozman, "Sino-Japanese relations: mutual images and the balance between globalization and regionalism," Woodrow Wilson International Center, Asia Program Special Report 113, July 2003, pp. 8–13.

is undermining China's national interest. As noted above, when Japan's minister of transport Chikage Ogi went to Beijing in August 2003, she was refused meetings with Prime Minister Wen Jiabao or any railway ministry officials. Such "snub diplomacy" can hardly be described as confident and mature.

This diplomatic failure is particularly disappointing because, from the mid-1990s, great hope had been placed on the role that a Beijing–Shanghai high-speed rail project could play in improving Sino-Japanese relations. Chinese scholars and policy makers were worried about the "cold politics, hot economics" (*zhengleng jingri*) imbalance in the relationship, and had hoped that the rail project could spur a new round of Sino-Japanese co-operation in which both "politics promotes economics, and economics promotes politics."<sup>74</sup> A contract was signed in the summer of 2004, but the vision of a co-operative relationship remains to be realized. That the rail project has become the source of political tension is, furthermore, extremely disheartening.

But you can hardly blame China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. With the decline of communist ideology as a source of legitimacy for the CCP, it depends even more on nationalism to legitimize its rule. So when popular nationalists demand tougher foreign policies, the MFA is stuck between a rock and a hard place: they need to maintain stable relations with Japan to ensure China's continued economic growth, but also fear appearing weak before nationalists at home.

Some Chinese pundits have declared recent anti-Japanese sentiment to be a "new chapter" or "second wave" of Chinese nationalism. In this view, books like 1996's *China Can Say No* and 1997's *Behind the Demonization of China* marked the emergence of the "first wave" of nationalism, which was largely anti-American and centred on events like the US involvement in the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, and the 2001 spy plane collision. This first wave of nationalism was based on books and magazines and thus largely confined to intellectuals. The current second wave, by contrast, focuses on Japan and is largely internet-based. As the 2003 and 2004 internet petitions demonstrated, well over a million Chinese netizens participate in this new "internet nationalism" (*wangluo minzuzhuyi*), which is seen as "more influential" than the earlier wave, better able to convert popular opinion into political action.<sup>75</sup>

To its advocates, the new internet nationalism provides "support" (*zhichi*) for the Chinese government as it makes Japan policy. "The power of the people [*minjian liliang*] has suddenly increased this year," argues Zhu Yuchen, creating "a positive cycle between the government and

74. Jin Xide, "'Gaotie' beijingxia de ZhongRi guanxi" ("Sino-Japanese relations against the backdrop of 'high-speed rail'"), *Huanqiu shibao* (*Global Times*), 26 September 2003. Available on IR China at <http://www.irchina.org/news/view.asp?id=100>. Accessed 22 December 2003.

75. "Internet nationalism starts a new chapter in Chinese nationalism."

the people."<sup>76</sup> As noted above, petition organizer Lu Yunfei felt that the million-signature petition that he presented to the Japanese embassy in early September 2003 put pressure on Japan during the sensitive Sino-Japanese negotiations over compensating the Chinese victims of the Qiqihar mustard gas accident. From Lu's perspective, he was "supporting" China's diplomats.

To its detractors, however, internet nationalism does not support but rather undermines the ability of Chinese diplomats to pursue the national interest. According to one source, Chinese officials told Japanese transport minister Ogi in 2003 that because of the petition they had recently received, they would have to wait and gauge "broad national opinion" before proceeding on the bullet train bid.<sup>77</sup> Detractors lament that popular nationalism thus turned an economic and technical decision into a political one, inhibiting China's ability to proceed efficiently on the new Beijing–Shanghai rail line. More broadly, because the regime seeks to avoid challenges to its nationalist credentials, it is loathe to confront popular nationalists. Its Japan policies, therefore, are increasingly reactive to nationalist opinion, rather than proactive to China's national interest.

Detractors are also rightly concerned by the ferocious, Red Guard-style tone of internet discourse, which Liu Xiaobiao calls a "raging fire" (*ruhuo rutu*).<sup>78</sup> Worse than the widespread slurs like "little Japs" and "devils" are words and deeds that seek physically to silence opponents – from assaulting both Zhao Wei's house and her body to widespread death threats against individuals like Ma Licheng. Government propagandists are still busy censoring liberal views in public discourse; internet nationalists, however, have become their tacit allies, bullying their liberal opponents into silence. One prominent scholar, for instance, told a reporter that although he agreed with Ma's views on the "new thinking," he had kept silent for fear of retribution from internet nationalists.<sup>79</sup> Regrettably, I cannot concur with Bruce Gilley's optimistic assertion that "in China, nationalism is helping to tip the balance toward, not away from, democracy."<sup>80</sup> The vitriolic tone of much internet discourse and the crushing defeat of the "new thinking" in 2003 China suggests that nationalism is *not* a force for democracy in China.

The emergence of a deep-rooted and popular anti-Japanese enmity in China today does not bode well for 21st-century Sino-Japanese relations. As nationalist sentiments become fiercer, the expert community is largely reduced to pleading for moderation, while the political leadership is increasingly held hostage to nationalist opinion in the making of China's

76. Zhu Yuchen, "Minjian liliang cudong ZhongRi guanxi xin bianju" ("The power of the people ushers in a new stage in Sino-Japanese relations"), *Waitan huabao*, 16 October 2003. Available on Sina.com at <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2003-10-16/23571935967.shtml>. Accessed 17 December 2003.

77. "Internet nationalism starts a new chapter in Chinese nationalism."

78. Liu Xiaobiao, "Who loves their country, and who harms their country?"

79. Zhu Yuchen, "The power of the people ushers in a new stage in Sino-Japanese relations."

80. Bruce Gilley, *China's Democratic Future: How it Will Happen and Where it Will Lead* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 72.

Japan policy. As a result, Japanese increasingly fear China's rise and possible future retribution for Japan's wartime aggressions; Japanese popular opinion surveys reveal a marked decline in favourable Japanese views of China.<sup>81</sup> An emergent Japanese nationalism, meanwhile, argues that Japan revise its pacifist constitution and develop its military – possibly including nuclear weapons to balance against threats like North Korea.<sup>82</sup> The possibility of a Sino-Japanese arms race is increasingly real. Chinese pessimists now argue that Asia is not big enough for both China and Japan: you “can't have two tigers in one forest” (*yilin burong erhu*). Optimists counter that China and Japan can co-operate, acting as the “dual engines” (*shuang yinqing*) of Asian development. Japan scholar Feng Zhaokui takes the middle ground, arguing that Sino-Japanese relations at the onset of the 21st century will be marked by the co-existence of both co-operation and conflict.<sup>83</sup> If we are lucky, Feng may be right. But if we are unlucky, and a major incident further inflames Chinese nationalism, Sino-Japanese relations are likely to seriously deteriorate.

81. See, for example, Kokubun Ryosei, “Beyond normalization: thirty years of Sino-Japanese diplomacy,” *Gaiko Forum* 2, No. 4 (2003), pp. 31–39.

82. Eugene A. Matthews, “Japan's new nationalism,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 6 (November/December 2003).

83. Feng Zhaokui, “Another discussion of the new thinking on Japan policy,” p. 81.